

but only through the governor's office. The state's position is therefore that of primary actor in the OCS leasing and permitting process, with mandated lines of communication to industry and local government as well as to the Secretary of Interior and the federal regulatory agencies. This gives the state a unique vantage point to develop planning strategies and to assume a positive role in the exploration decision process, and provides the means to bring state policies to bear on the Exploration Plan decision. (NERBC, Strategies for State Participation in OCS Exploration Decisions, p. 85).

A state should get involved in the OCS decision-making process as early as possible and not wait for the formal consultations that occur when the many exploration documents are submitted. If prior contact is not made, the state may find that the formal proposal submitted by an oil company ignores or provides insufficient documentation for state concerns such as environmental protection, natural resources management, and economic development. The state's early involvement, while an industry's plans for exploration are still flexible, may allow the technical aspects of the plan to be influenced by state concerns.

Local Role

Local governmental officials and planners are given a legislative sanction under the OCS Lands Act Amendments to play a leading role in the OCS decision-making process. This role begins with the establishment or strengthening of the lines of communication between the local agencies (and interested parties) and the agencies chosen by the state to handle the different requirements of the OCS development process. Although this state-local coordination should be a joint responsibility, the local agencies must often demonstrate their interest and desire for involvement in the OCS-related activities before they are taken seriously by the state. After the lease sale, it is important for local concerns to be voiced prior to the oil companies' initiation of the permit process. This will allow the state to consider local problems in the development of sound state planning strategies to deal with the exploration stage and its related permit process. No matter how far-sighted and comprehensive a state's planning strategy, the facility-siting portion of it can be implemented only through the application of local zoning ordinances and other development guidance tools. If local policies and plans are not taken into account in the state's formulation of an OCS plan, the entire exercise could be wasted and the opportunities for securing the benefits and mitigating the adverse impacts of OCS-related onshore developments could be lost.

State agencies (such as the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development) often develop direct lines of communication and close working relationships with coastal communities and are able to reflect local